

Hamilton Field, Fire Station and Guard House
(Facility No. 456)
Southwest corner of 7th Street and Hangar Avenue
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-AB

HABS
CAL
21-NOVA,
IAB -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD
Fire Station and Guard House
(Facility No. 456)

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21-NOVA,
IAB-

HABS No. CA-2398-AB

Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Fire Station and Guard House
Facility No. 456 (southwest corner of 7th Street and Hangar Avenue)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Present Owner: General Services Administration, Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of Significance:

The base Fire Station and Guard House initially provided fire rescue service to the entire base and air field and had a guard house with cells in the rear. During the 1950s, the interior was converted to security offices and the front bays enclosed with modern doors and windows. Although this alteration has changed the historic appearance of the building to some extent, it still retains the general appearance of a firehouse and many other exterior features remain unaltered.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

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PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of Erection:** The contract was awarded on October 30, 1933, and construction was completed on August 18, 1934 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).
2. **Architect:** Hamilton Field was designed under the guidance of Captain Howard B. Nurse, Construction Quartermaster. He was assisted by a corps of civilians headed by H. P. Spencer, Chief Architect, and F. W. Salfinger, Chief Engineer. Captain F. C. Petes and Lieutenant J. H. Veal of the Quartermaster's Corps were detailed to Marin County by the War Department to assist Nurse (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). Landscaping efforts were directed by C. C. Stevens, a local landscape engineer, using plantings chosen by Nurse and donated by Marin County citizens.
3. **Original Owner:** Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The Fire Station and Guard House was transferred to the General Services Administration in 1974 and is currently being sold to private developers as excess property.
4. **Builder, Contractor, Supplier:** The Fire Station and Guard House was built by Frank J. Reilley of Sacramento. The winning bid was for \$38,231.00 and the Fire Station and Guard House, when completed, cost \$37,799.64.
5. **Original Plans and Construction:** Original plans for administrative and industrial buildings were drawn on linen with black ink by Nurse's corps of architects. The originals appear to have been destroyed, but copies of some of these plans (elevations, electrical, plumbing) are filed in the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. and the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato. Facility cards for these buildings, including an original photograph taken at completion of construction, and floor plans are on file at the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato, California.
6. **Alterations/Additions:** The interior was converted to office space and the front bays enclosed with modern doors and windows in 1958. The fire house truck bays

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were converted to office space in 1958 and 1960. At this time the floor drains were covered with felt paper and concrete. Security bars were added to interior windows. The two porches were enclosed and converted to offices at this time. In 1960 acoustical tile walls and suspended ceilings were installed in the first floor, as were walnut wainscoting and doors; the traditional fireman's pole was removed during this 1960 work.

B. Historical Context:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural Character:** Nurse and his team of architects designed reinforced concrete buildings covered with white stucco and red tile roofs and other features such as arcades and ornamental door surrounds in a basic Spanish Colonial Revival style. This style was used by Captain Nurse at Randolph Field in Texas and by other Army architects at various bases (Fine and Remington 1972:48; Thomason and Associates 1993). Captain Nurse blended the standard Colonial Revival design with elements borrowed from Moorish, Spanish Churrigueresque, Mission, and Art Moderne styles, creating a unique Spanish Eclectic look. Facility No. 456 has many Moorish elements, including arches, brackets, decorative tile work, and use of metal rails.

The primary method of construction for the administrative and industrial buildings was reinforced concrete with stucco exteriors and Mission tile roofs. Foundations of all buildings were constructed of concrete reinforced with steel bars in consideration of the seismic activity of the region. Buildings in the administrative and industrial areas were built using concrete and wood piles for support in a response to their construction on reclaimed salt marsh.

2. **Condition of fabric:** The Fire Station is in fair condition. Paint is peeling off the exterior. Acoustical ceilings tiles are falling to the floor inside.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** The Fire Station and Guard House is constructed in a "T" plan with a two-story central mass with projecting wings on the first story east and west elevations. The building measures 77 feet wide by 103 feet 5 inches long. The

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front elevation consists of a cantilevered balcony beneath four arched windows on the second story, over the original four fire-fighting equipment access doors which were blocked with masonry construction when the building was converted to an administrative office building in 1958.

2. Foundation: During initial construction, 43 wood piers with 14-inch diameters were driven into the salt marsh to a minimum depth of three feet. Wood piles were reinforced with one-inch bolts. Fourteen-inch-diameter wrought iron pipes bolted onto the wood extended an additional five feet. Number 18 gauge corrugated metal casings with poured concrete interiors added two feet of height and ended at the assumed water line. The foundation placed on top of the piles included reinforced steel bars and tie beams and concrete with an average bottom elevation of minus two feet. Concrete slab subflooring brought the finished grade to plus one foot elevation in the truck room. The remainder of the station and the guard room was at plus four and one-third feet grade elevation. The foundation is faced with stone in the rear and porch portions.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are reinforced concrete with a smooth cementitious stucco finish. Exterior detailing consists of a projecting band course of recessed dentils at the cornice level, square towers at the four corners of the central mass of the building, battered buttresses on the rear elevation corners, and projecting window sills. Decorative terra cotta four-inch pipe vents in a diamond pattern are located on the second story facade between the windows and the cornice and on the front of the extended wings beneath the shed roof. There are two sets of vents on the front facade and three on each side and the rear elevation. Rectangular cast concrete decorative vents in a diamond pattern provide light to the two windows that flank the original two equipment access doors on the front facade.

4. Structural system's, framing: The building is supported by reinforced concrete columns, a steel truss roof system, and concrete slab floors and reinforced concrete tie beams.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: A cantilevered concrete balcony, supported by eight stepped brackets, is located on the second-story front facade. The balcony railing is concrete with recessed panels and has four reinforced cast concrete Moorish-style finials. Porches are located on either side of the two-story central mass, in the rear of the projecting wings, and have shed roofs covered with terra cotta Mission tile. They have concrete floors and are accessed via wide concrete steps. Both porches were enclosed in 1958.

6. Chimneys: A rectangular stucco-covered chimney is located in the center rear of the two-story central mass of the building. It is pierced by two arches front and rear and one on each side; a Mission tile gable roof and a band course provide decoration beneath

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the arches. Metal S-shaped brackets are located on the front and rear of the chimney. An iron brace and a copper cricket anchors the chimney to the central rod.

7. Openings:

a. **Doorways/doors:** Building 456 originally had four fire-fighting equipment access doors across the lower story front facade. They were solid-core wood with recessed panels and elongated, quatrefoil windows covered with wrought iron bars, and were supported with six decorative wrought iron strap hinges and brass drip plates. The doors have been removed and the openings have been enclosed with masonry construction. Three aluminum personnel doors were installed in the enclosed areas when the building was modified in 1965. Four metal frame multi-pane doors with fanlights provide access to the central front balcony. Original exterior doors are solid-core wood with four lights set over three recessed panels and eight lights over four recessed panels. A door in the rear west wall is solid-core wood with nine lights over a cross panel; it has a three-light transom.

b. **Windows/shutters:** Four sets of metal frame awning windows have been set into the masonry which enclosed the original fire-fighting access doors on the lower story front facade. All other windows are original. They consist of eight-light metal frame casement windows, five on each side and across the rear second story elevation, three on each side of the extended wings and two on the rear elevation of the central mass. A fixed transom window with eight lights is over the casement windows. The rear guard house portion of the building has metal detention type windows, five large and one small on each side and two on the rear, covered with exterior iron bars.

8. Roof:

a. **Shape/covering:** The two-story central mass of the Fire Station and Guard House has a hipped roof, as does the rear lower portion. The projecting wings have shed roof coverings. All are covered with terra cotta Mission tile and have tile ridgelines.

b. **Cornice/eaves:** A projecting stucco band course in a recessed dentil design is located beneath the eaves at the cornice level. Copper hanging gutters and decorative scuppers and downspouts are located on all corners of the building, with two on each side of the corner towers. Cast concrete splash blocks are located at the bottom of each downspout.

c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** Square stucco-covered cast stone towers capped with two band courses and a finial are located on the four corners of the central mass of the building. A bell tower, supported by four metal frame legs, is located at the peak of the hip roof.

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C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

a. **First Floor:** The original primary access to the Fire Station and Guard House was through the four front double fire-fighting equipment doors; it is now through the personnel doors which have replaced them. The central front section of the central mass consisted of a truck room, with a raised day room, officer's day room, and guard room in the rear portion. The west wing housed the ambulance and a rear porch; the east wing had a crash truck area, tool room, and rear porch. The rear one-story leg of the "T" was used as a guard house and originally contained bunkrooms or cells for Class A, Class B, and Class C prisoners, and solitary confinement. The rooms were separated by a latrine.

b. **Second Floor:** Originally the second floor contained a firemen's dormitory and guards' dormitory across the front, with NCO firemen's and guards' rooms, latrines for each, and another small room. Access is provided by two central interior staircases. A brass fire pole, no longer extant, provided emergency egress from the firemen's dormitory to the truck room. Remnants of the pole include a concrete hole and black rubber mat.

c. **Attic:** The attic is open with windows providing natural light. It is accessed by a stairway and is used for storage.

2. Stairways: The Fire Station and Guard House is served by two sets of staircases, one on the firemen's west side and one on the guards' east side. Both have concrete risers and steps with a metal edge plate covering the top portion of the riser and the tread. The balustrades consist of two-inch metal pipe railings affixed to the outside walls.

3. Flooring: The subflooring for the building is concrete slab reinforced with four-inch square mesh with #6 galvanized wire. Original covering consists of brown linoleum, extant on the second floor. The concrete floor on the first story has been covered with eight inch green asphalt tile. It originally had central drains in the truck room. Floors in the latrines consist of one inch and one inch by two inch ceramic tiles, with a marble threshold in the doorways.

4. Wall/ceiling finish: The original walls and ceilings were painted plaster. Acoustical tile walls and suspension ceilings have been installed in the original truck room, as well as composition wood paneling in the temporary wall dividers. The latrine walls are covered with horizontal yellow-glazed ceramic tile measuring four inches by eight inches. The guard house cells have chain link ceilings.

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5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways/doors: The original interior doors are four-light over three recessed panels; those on the second story have obscure glass. Replacement doors to the offices are solid-core with five horizontal recessed panels. A steel barred door once provided access to the guard room.
 - b. Windows: Interior cell windows have no glass but are covered with chain link.
6. Decorative features/trim: No significant decorative trim was noted.
7. Hardware: Door hardware consists of a standard circular knob and lock set with half mortise door hinge. The original brass switch plates and push plates are extant in the second story.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The building was originally heated with 22 cast iron, gas steam Peerless Wall radiators made by American Radiator Company. A boiler room is located in the center of the first floor at the "T" and contains an original "Ideal" cast iron gas boiler with a copper flue made by Amanca Gas Products Company, and a water heater.
 - b. Ventilation: Ventilation for the structure is through four-inch terra cotta tile pipe vents in the attic story and along the ground level. The truck room and guard house have 16-inch ventilators protruding from the roof line.
 - c. Lighting: There were originally three lanterns on the front facade, between and on each side of the main doors; none are extant. Hanging lanterns on brackets were located on the side porch entries. Original interior lighting consisted of "schoolhouse" fixtures with a canopy and pole with large milk glass bowl shade. Some of them have been replaced with suspended industrial type, open end two-tube florescent lighting fixtures, eight feet long, with porcelain enamel metal covers. Other lights include four-tube fluorescent lights covered with four-panel shallow diffused plastic covers. Bathrooms have original porcelain canopy pull-chain lights.
 - d. Plumbing: The latrine in the guard house has the original Standard small urinal, two Standard flush-valve toilets with black Olsonite lids, a cast iron mop sink with chrome rim, three modern sinks, and a metal stall shower. The second floor has men's and women's bathrooms. The men's room has a Standard Madera flush valve toilet with a Beneke black plastic lid, a floor urinal made by Standard

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with side flanges, two Standard sinks, a cast iron mop sink, and a marble shower stall with original fixtures. The women's bathroom has two floor urinals, two flush-valve toilets, and two wall-mounted sinks, all made by Standard.

9. **Original Furnishings:** The original flagpole base, made of cast iron with a chevron design, is in the attic. Original light fixtures (e.g., schoolhouse globes) are also stored in the attic.

D. Site:

1. **General site orientation:** The primary facade of Building 456 faces northwest, towards the corner of 7th Street and Hangar Avenue. It is sited diagonally on the corner lot. It is located in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field on a flat site that is surrounded by rolling hills, fitting within a grid system adjacent to the flight field. An asphalt parking lot, originally the fire-equipment apron, is located in front of the building.

2. **Historic landscape design:** Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

The majority of buildings in the administration area have some landscaping, particularly around the NCO barracks. Street trees, such as Modesto ash, camphor, and various palms, are present throughout this area. Building corner and doorways are delimited by a number of conifers, the most prominent being sawara false cypress and Italian cypress. Accent trees include coast redwood and some red ironbark, which were incorporated into divider triangles and sometimes near entrances. California and Mexican fan palms and golden bamboo were prominent framers of entrances, as was the New Zealand dracaena. Foundation plantings are quite diverse and include mock orange, flowering quince, Portugal laurel, and Manukka tea tree. Japanese privet, Hollywood juniper, and heavenly bamboo appear to have been added subsequent to the late 1930s and were not part of the original landscape design on base.

The Fire Station and Guard House is surrounded by lawns, separated from the streets by concrete sidewalks and a row of camphor trees along 7th Street. A palm tree, cedar tree, and foundation shrubbery consisting of crepe myrtle, pyracantha, and yucca are planted in the yard surrounding the building.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398). Copies of Nurse's plans for this building and subsequent improvements are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. and the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

B. Historic Maps and Views:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

C. Interviews:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

D. Bibliography:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II, Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic District, Marin County, California*. Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates

1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas*. Cultural Resource Survey, Final Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin, Texas.

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E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

F. Supplemental Material:

See also the project Field Record, roll 55, exposures 9-12; roll 56, exposures 1-12; roll 57, exposures 1-12; and roll 58, exposures 1-3. The Field Record views are interiors, taken in May, 1993.

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility No. 456, dated in the 1930s and prepared by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form. The line drawn sketches were drafted on site in 1994 by Keith Syda, scanned into a computer and drawn by Christopher MacDonald in 1995, and corrected and finalized by Claire Warshaw in 1996 (all PAR Environmental Services, Inc. staff).

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were

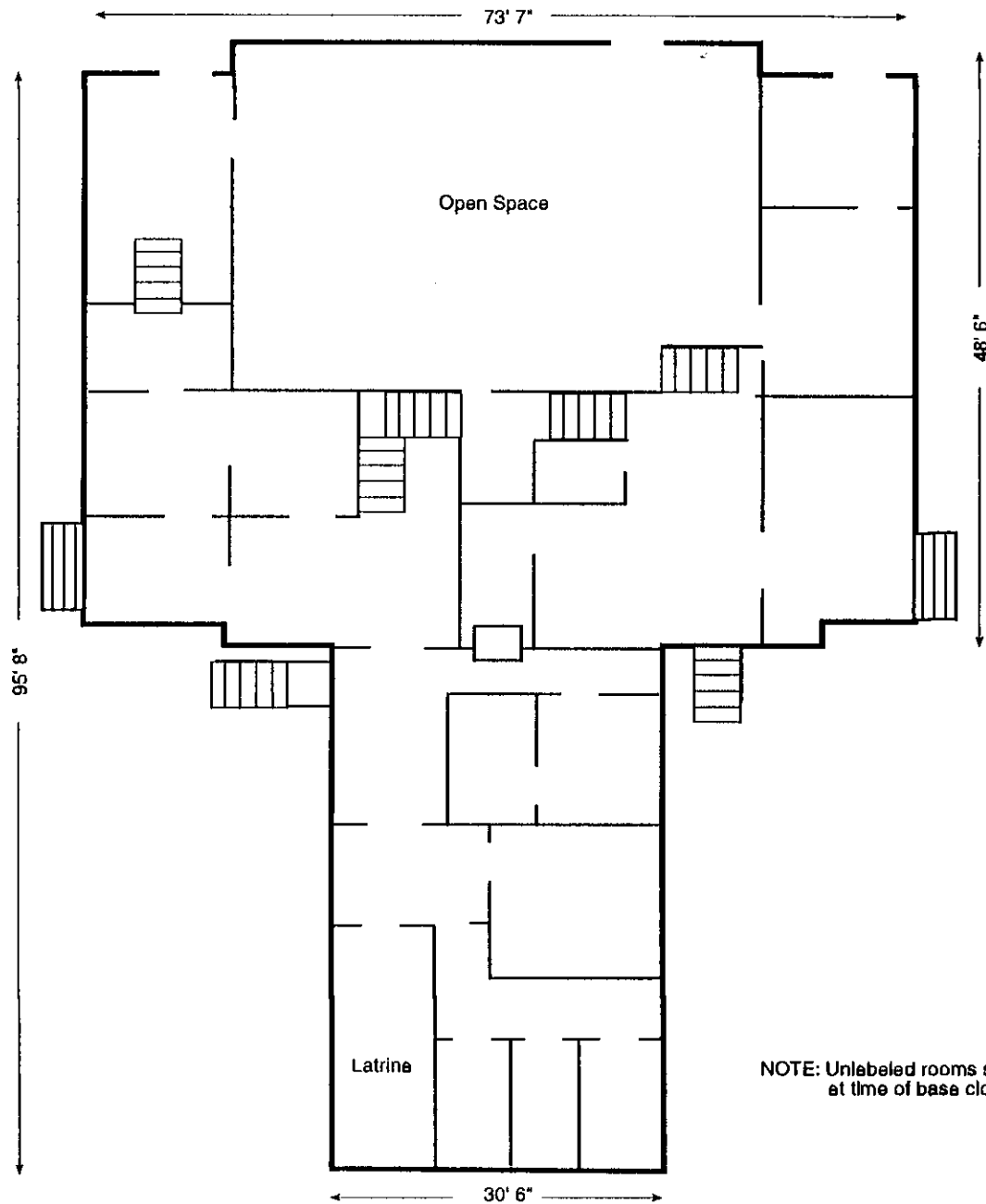
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embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

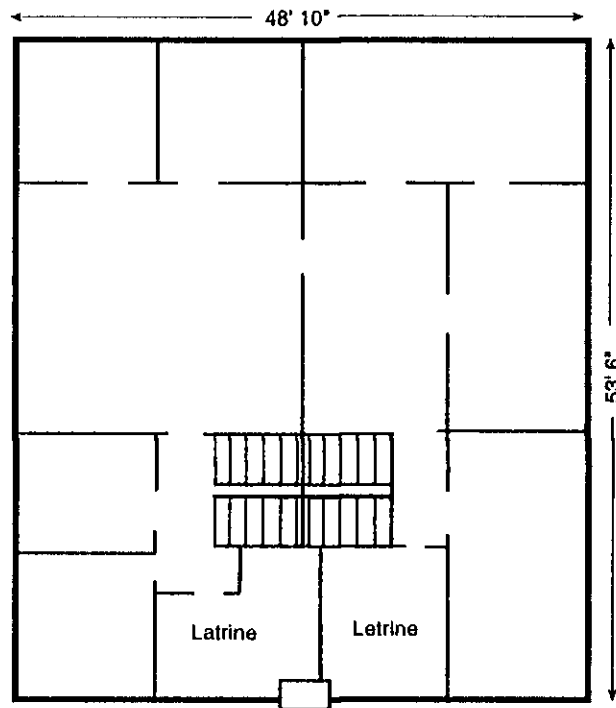


First Floor





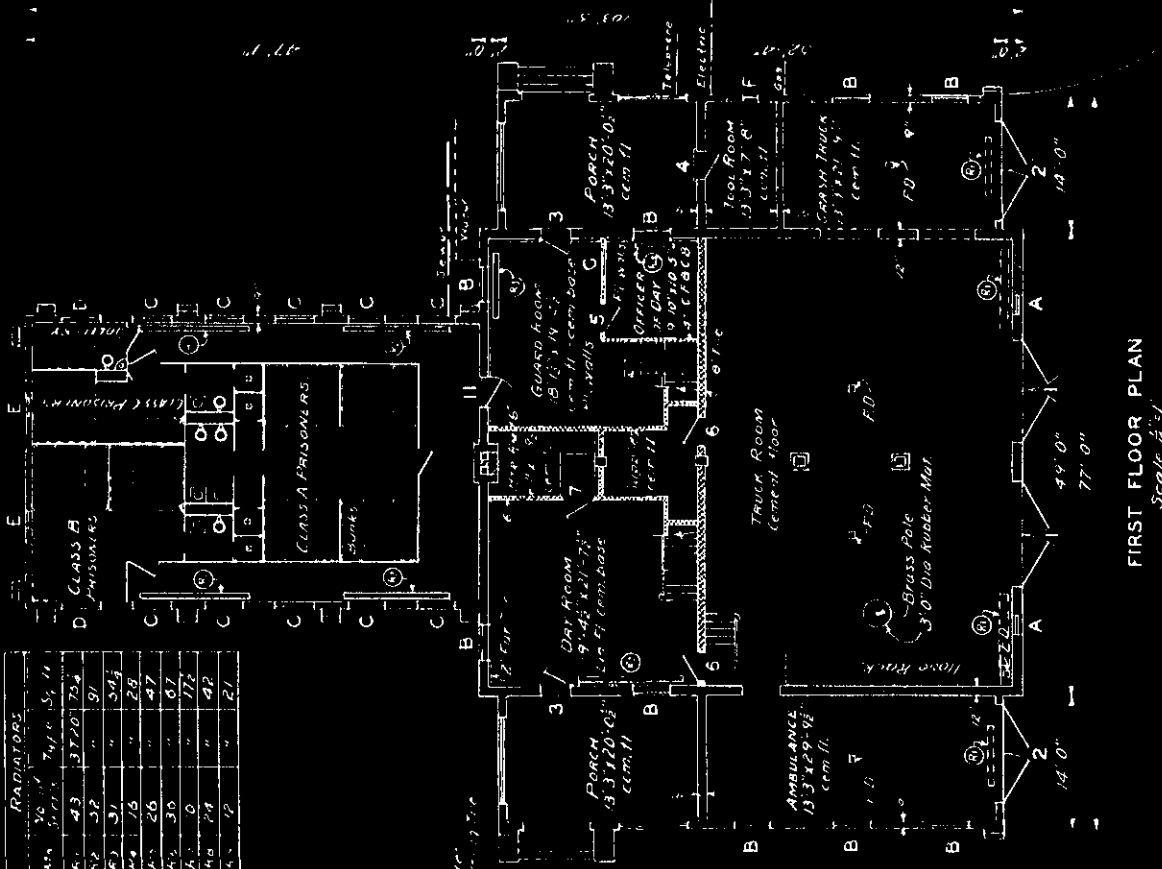
Second Floor



NOTE: Unlabeled rooms served as offices
at the time of base closure (1974)

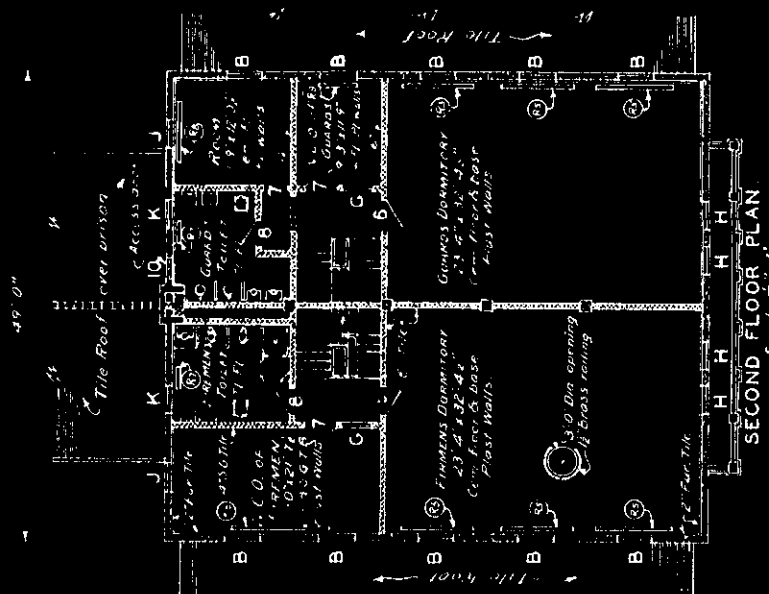
LIST OF OPENINGS

DOORS		WINDOWS		Description
No.	Size	No.	Size	
1	10'-0" x 10'-0"	1	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
2	10'-0" x 10'-0"	2	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
3	10'-0" x 10'-0"	3	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
4	10'-0" x 10'-0"	4	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
5	10'-0" x 10'-0"	5	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
6	10'-0" x 10'-0"	6	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
7	10'-0" x 10'-0"	7	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
8	10'-0" x 10'-0"	8	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
9	10'-0" x 10'-0"	9	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
10	10'-0" x 10'-0"	10	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance
11	10'-0" x 10'-0"	11	1'-0" x 3'-0"	Entrance



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 Scale 1/8" = 1'

TYPICAL WALL SECTION
 Scale 1/8" = 1'



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
 Scale 1/8" = 1'

WAR DEPARTMENT
 OFFICE CONSTRUCTING QUARTERMASTER
 HAMILTON FIELD, CALIF.

FIRE AND GUARD HOUSE

Drawn G.L.R.	Checked G.L.R.	Date 3-20-35
Traced G.L.R.	Checked G.L.R.	
By H. B. Nupse	By H. B. Nupse	
By Capt. G. M. Corcoran	By Capt. G. M. Corcoran	
By H. B. Nupse	By H. B. Nupse	
By H. B. Nupse	By H. B. Nupse	
By H. B. Nupse	By H. B. Nupse	